1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

584 in the same district, the background of the young man is well enough known so that no investigation is necessary, though unfailingly a long and formal discussion of the suitor, his qualities, and his prospects ensues. If his home is some distance away, however, meticulous inquiries are made not only concerning the young man and his immediate family, but of
584 his ancestry as well. Should the suitor live near the home of
212 the young woman, as usually happens, his own parents come with a *lettre de demand*. In earlier days the "letter" was written on flowered paper with a lacy border, but today plain colored paper does very well. When presented, it is wrapped
[603] in a green silk handkerchief, "for hope" — the handkerchief
[822] costs about five gourdes, and a similar amount is given the scribe — and is usually carried by the oldest man of the family; that is to say, the paternal grandfather if living, or if he is dead, the father, accompanied by the mother and perhaps the other grandparents. Today it is said that in the
[178] valley of Mirebalais the custom of presenting these letters of request is often disregarded, but is by no means extinct.[1]

The family of the girl is always apprised of the exact time of the visit, and refreshments are on hand. No reply is given at the time of the delivery of the "letter," since the families of both the father and the mother of the girl must consent to the match before it can be finally approved. However, at the stage of the courtship which the presentation of a "letter" implies, this delayed answer is a matter of form, for if the proposal had not been acceptable, the girl would not have been allowed to see the suitor. The refusal of a "letter" has
● [578] been known to occur, but this is regarded as a deadly insult, and deep enmity between the families follows. Should the family of the girl, not wishing to be abrupt, accept the "letter" and proffer refreshments to its bearers, but later return the same "letter" as a sign of rejection, even this would be
584 bitterly resented. Under such circumstances the young man
832 takes steps to obtain revenge by providing himself with a
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1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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love-charm designed to insure the young girl's coming to him. He then uses all persuasion to give her a child and, this achieved, abandons her to show his contempt for the family that has formally refused to accept him as a son-in-law.

Usually, however, the visit is returned by the family of the girl, bearing a "response" of acceptance wrapped in a red silk handkerchief, "for victory." And just as the family of the young woman had known in advance of the coming of her suitor's relatives, word of the favorable verdict is now sent through indirect channels, so that the family of the young man may also be prepared to receive the emissaries who come on behalf of the girl.

With this formal acceptance of the young man's suit, the wedding waits until he has accumulated the requisites for a household. Custom dictates that even should he be prepared, the ceremony must be delayed for several months while he remains in a probationary state, to assure the family of his fiancée of his worthiness. The young woman is also under surveillance during this time, when she may be asked to help her future mother-in-law with the housework, and particularly with the washing and ironing of linens. Generally a period of from two to three years elapses before the bridegroom accumulates enough to fulfill his obligations in marriage. During this time the family of the young woman is acquiring the things she is expected to bring to her husband: linens and dishes—though in the poorer peasant families these items would not be provided her—cooking utensils, water-containers, knives, forks, and other things needed for the household. Her father also presents her with a horse, a donkey, six or seven pigs, the same number of goats, as well as chickens, guinea-hens, and turkeys.

Tokens of virginity are not demanded before the match, since Mirebalais custom requires that the girl tell before her marriage whether she has had relations with other men. She may be sent away if it is discovered that she has told an un-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

today not only in Mirebalais, but, in their essential outlines, throughout the Republic.

The larger relationship grouping originates in the immediate family, and the formation of new extended families is a continuing arc. Characteristically, the process begins when a man leaves the habitation of his father and, with his wife, settles on land somewhat remote from the dwellings of either his people or those of his wife. As the sons of this couple grow up and marry, they make their homes near that of their father, so that in time a group of immediate families related in the paternal line clusters about the dwelling of this original settler, forming a habitation. The continuation of the process depends upon the amount of land available to the group; in any event, given enough time, land to permit all the male descendants of the founder to support themselves and their families will be lacking, so that the younger men will repeat the process that has been described, and themselves become the founders of new habitations whose members, with the passing of generations, will eventually be lost to the original group. While land is available, a young man is given several hectares by his father when he marries, and here he establishes his household. If the family have prospered, additional land is bought as more young men grow up, so that the relationship group may become a community of considerable size.

In accordance with this rule of residence, only rarely will a man settle on the property of his wife's parents, since to do so reflects unfavorably on his personal status. When this does occur, it is probably because of a serious quarrel with his own people. In such a case, if his marriage endures, he becomes a quasi-member of his wife's family, but unless he has committed some extremely grave offense, such as publicly insulting or striking a parent or grandparent, he does not forfeit membership in his own group.[4] Similarly, the fact of his having settled away from the habitation of his family does not disinherit him, for, as will be seen, this occurs in but the

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

796 tablishment of the family *maison de servitude*, a special ritual
[782] for Legba at the *barrière* was required. The one who took charge threw some rum on the *boucan* that had been made for Legba. Taking a candle, he struck the drums with it; then described *verver* and placed an egg on the white flour he piled
796 just inside the *barrière*. The rite proceeded no farther, how-
578 ever, for with the appearance of the head of the family, accompanied by his wife and son, who was the young man who had been possessed by Gede the first night of the *service*, a discussion arose which soon developed into a quarrel, because the family head felt that he had not been notified of this dance in the manner due his position. Finally with the cry: "If anything happens to the family because of this, I am not responsible," he departed in a rage. This was regarded as serious, because should a dance which ended an important rite be held with some of the family absent, the gods might be angered and serious consequences might follow. The woman, who had been instrumental in seeing that the *service* was given and had cared for most of the preparations, bravely decided to continue with the ritual, however, and the drumming was resumed.

796 Alcohol and flour were thereupon poured on the drum-
533 heads, while a number of songs were sung by all present:
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[782]

Bonjou' manman, bonjou' papa,	Good-day, mamma, good-day, papa,
Ma p' mandé coumen nou' yè	I ask how are you.
Lan Guinée gangnin dent'.	In Guinea there are teeth.
Moin entré, moin entré,	I entered, I entered,
Ou pas salué moin.	You did not greet me.
Agoue-e, hunto	Agowe, hunto (spirit in the drum)
Agasu-e	Agasu-e
Agoué-e hunto, e-o.	Agowe hunto, e-o.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

To go away and talk, oh!
Ogoun Balindjo
The eyes see, the mouth is closed, oh! *
Ogoun Balindjo
Don't you see they come to look at me?

Or again, the loa Ogoun and Loko Attiso are invoked to witness a person's misery, though in this song the cause is not explained:

Ogoun oh ga'dé misè!
Papa Ogoun ou wa ga'dé misè!
Ga'dé misè oh Lok' Attiso ga'dé misè là yé! [Ex. 105]

Ogoun, oh, look at my misery!
Papa Ogoun, you will look at my misery!
Look at my misery, oh, Loko Attiso, look at my misery here!

The impulse to criticism most often stems from personal injuries, but on occasion songs are used as a community affair to exert social pressures on an errant member of the neighborhood:

Frè' Jean-Pierre wa quitté bwè tafia!
Frè' Jean-Pierre ti moune yo tounè!

Brother Jean-Pierre, stop drinking tafia! †
Brother Jean-Pierre, the little children are naked!

Although discussions of neighbors' affairs tend to have this moral tone, a vast number of songs are pure gossip and are sung for their ribald or wry humor, as the case may be. In some the objects of ridicule are named; in others the allusions are indirect, so that only those who are familiar with the situation will know the people concerned. Open quarreling often provides amusement and substance for satire. The community can sense petulance, stupidity, and stubbornness through a confusion of charges and countercharges, and is quick to burlesque them. Thus there are public pressures against petty and needless disturbances. The following song refers to a dispute over ownership of an unnamed article.

Moin dit c'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
Moin dit c'est zaffai grand moune! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
Moin dit n'ap chaché li! Ciyé!
N'ap prend li! Ciyé!
Moin dit c'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé! [Ex. 106]

* That is to say, the eyes should see and the mouth should be closed.
† An alcoholic drink.

2: Courlander B-S (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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I say it belongs to the old man! *Ciyél* *
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyél*
I say it's the old man's affair! *Ciyél*
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyél*
I say I'll look for it! *Ciyél*
I'm going to take it! *Ciyél*
I say it belongs to the old man, *Ciyél*
It's the old man's thing, *Ciyél*

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Another burlesque of a quarrel concerns a mother who has sent her daughter down to the river to do the washing. Some question arises as to whether the girl went down to the river at all, or whether she went elsewhere. There is implicit suggestion that the girl may have been at a rendezvous. The mother and the girl argue back and forth:

Moin voyé Lanmeci nan dleau,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Moin voyé Lanmeci nan dleau,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Moin voyé Lanmeci nan dleau,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Moin voyé Lanmeci nan dleau,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Lanmeci coté ou té yé?	Lanmeci, where are you?
Là'm té yé!	I was there!
Là'm té yé!	I was there!
Là'm té yé!	I was there!
Là'm té yé!	I was there!
Là'm! [Ex. 107]	There!

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Most of the scandal songs are fragmentary and tangent, though clear in implication, like this one:

C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin manman!
C'est pas faute moin!
Gainyain moune t'ap marché dèyè bien!
Rwo woyo!
Gainyain moune t'ap marché dèyè bien!
Gainyain moune nan lacour à,
Prend nouvelle oh, so! [Ex. 108]

It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!

* Used as an exclamation.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (nodate) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical
855 punishment is concerned. The average peasant child can hardly
861 properly be said to be "brought up": he merely grows, eats whatever
152 his family eats or whatever fruits he can pick up, and learns his place in the community as he matures. In anger, parents are likely to use in correction the first thing that comes to hand. There is a surprising callousness to pain among these generally kindly people: they beat their donkeys unmercifully, and strap harness over open sores; they carry chickens, head down and feet tied together and mouths gaping, for miles in the sun; they revel in gory cockfights. If, therefore, a parent is minded to beat his child, he will probably do a thorough
● [578] job of it. A peasant woman, pommeling her son with a broomstick, replied to the protests of a white passer-by, "*Li nègue; li pas fait li mal.*" ("He's a Negro; it won't hurt him.") The interference of a stranger in the beating of a wife by her man, armed with a club, was resented by both man and woman as an interference with a purely family quarrel.

831 The concept of sexual continence is lacking among the peasants.
834 Sex, indeed, hardly enters the realm of morality except in connection
864 with adulterous dalliance of one man with another's woman. There is no virtue in abstaining from sex relations when the sexual urge is strong. Mothers tell love stories in all their frank details to their young daughters, and some who care about such matters are adept in all lore connected with stimulating and satisfying a man's desire.[5]
[342] Since huts are small and the whole family sleeps in the same room, children have ample opportunity to observe the sexual life of their parents. If a girl, as a result of her own experiments, has a child born to her, there is no disgrace. Practically every peasant is "illegitimate," so that the term means nothing; a baby will soon be old enough to assist in the work of the home, thus becoming an asset. It is expected that as soon as a youth grows up he will find a mate and begin a family of his own.

241 The family is as important an element of peasant life as formal
439 marriage is unimportant. It is the economic unit. Ever since the days
593 of Pétion Haitian economy has been one of small things: even the crops are small subsistence crops of maize, millet, beans, rice, yams, and frequently trees of bananas, plantains, and coffee, which require no particular cultivation. Enough coffee has been produced in Haiti for annual export ever since 1804, but until recent years the beans

5. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, pp. 22 ff.